



COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
Consumer Decision Making Through Experimentation	

Academic staff	Core academic unit(s)
Coordinating: Elzė Uždavinytė Other: Živilė Kaminskienė, Agnė Zakarevičiūtė	Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
First	Optional

Mode of delivery	Semester or period when it is delivered	Language of instruction
Auditorium	Spring	English

Requisites	
Prerequisites: none	Co-requisites (if relevant): none

Number of ECTS credits allocated	Student's workload (total)	Contact hours	Individual work
5	130	48	82

Purpose of the course unit		
The aim of the subject: To introduce students to the psychological and behavioral processes underlying how consumers make choices in everyday life. The course explores how individuals evaluate products, services, or experiences, and how factors such as emotions, cognition, identity, and social influence shape their decisions. Through hands-on experimentation, students learn how to design basic behavioral experiments to understand consumer preferences and biases. The course also highlights the role of sustainability, circular consumption, and health-related choices in modern consumer behavior, encouraging students to critically reflect on how scientific insights can promote more responsible and ethical consumption patterns. Competences developed: • Ability to explore how consumers make decisions, particularly in the contexts of circular and sustainable consumption, individual differences, and health-related behaviors, through experimental research. • Ability to generate interesting and relevant research questions and hypotheses • Skills necessary to develop simple experimental studies.		
Learning outcomes of the course unit	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
Understanding of consumer decision-making processes with a particular focus on circular and sustainable consumption, individual differences, and health-related behavior through experimentation	Lecturing, study of additional literature, individual and teamwork, group presentations, and discussions.	Group assignments consisting of theory application, and practical recommendations in various areas of consumer decision making (presentations). Exam LAB work
Knowledge of the persuasion strategies		
Understanding of the basic experimental research design principles		

Ability to formulate research hypotheses, raise research questions		
Students will be able to present relevant theories and survey findings to an audience and discuss their implications for marketing practice.		

Content	Contact hours							Individual work: time and assignments	
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Workshops	Laboratory work	Internship	Contact hours, total	Individual work	Tasks for individual work
1. Introduction to Consumer Decision Making	2		2				4	4	Recommended reading: Griskevicius, V., & Kenrick, D. T. (2013). Fundamental motives: How evolutionary needs influence consumer behavior. Journal of consumer psychology, 23(3), 372-386. Additional information provided by the lecturer.
2. Introduction to Persuasion and Consumer Resistance	2		2				4	8	Information provided by the lecturer.
3. Persuasion and Consumer Resistance II	2		2				4	4	Knowles, E. S., & Linn, J. A. (2004). Approach-avoidance model of persuasion: Alpha and omega strategies for change. In Resistance and persuasion (pp. 117-148). Psychology Press. Additional information provided by the lecturer.
4. Social and Self-Identity in Consumer Decisions	2		2						Gao, Wheeler, & Shiv (2009) The Shaken Self: Product choices as a means of restoring self-view confidence. Journal of Consumer Research, 36, 29-38 Additional information provided by the lecturer.
5. Introduction to Experimental Research Design I	2				2		4	8	Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Brewer, M. B. (1998). Experimentation in social psychology. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), The Handbook of Social Psychology (4th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 99 142). Boston: McGraw Hill. Additional information provided by the lecturer.
6. Introduction to Experimental Research Design II	2		2				4	4	Kardes, F. R. (1996). In defense of experimental consumer psychology. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 5(3), 279-296. Information provided by the lecturer.
7. Psychological Traits and Consumer Decisions	2		2				4	8	Rajagopal (2018). Consumer behavior theories: convergence

									of divergent perspectives with applications to marketing and management. Business Expert Press. 198 p. (Chapter four)
8. Role of Emotions & Heuristics	2		2				4	8	Information provided by the lecturer.
9. Normative Social Influence and Consumer Decisions	2		2				4	8	Cialdini, R. B., Reno, R. R., & Kallgren, C. A. (1990). A focus theory of normative conduct: Recycling the concept of norms to reduce littering in public places. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 58(6), 1015–1026. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.58.6.1015 Nolan, J. M., Schultz, P. W., Cialdini, R. B., Goldstein, N. J., & Griskevicius, V. (2008). Normative social influence is underdetected. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i> , 34(7), 913–923. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208316691
10. Sustainable and Circular Consumption	2		2				4	8	White, K., Habib, R., & Hardisty, D. J. (2019). How to SHIFT consumer behaviors to be more sustainable: A literature review and guiding framework. <i>Journal of Marketing</i> , 83(3), 22-49. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919825649
11. Student presentations and discussions	2		2						
12. Sustainable and Circular Consumption & course Wrap-up	2		2				4	8	Luchs, M. G., Naylor, R. W., Irwin, J. R., & Raghunathan, R. (2010). The sustainability liability: Potential negative effects of ethicality on product preference. <i>Journal of Marketing</i> , 74(5), 18-31. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.5.18
Total	24		22		2		48	82	

Assessment strategy	Weight %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
LAB work	20	During the semester	Students will be invited to participate in research studies conducted at the VU Consumer Decision Making LAB twice per semester. Students who participate in both studies in the LAB will receive 2 points (or 20 proc. of their final grade). Students who will participate once will receive 1 point (or 10 proc of their final grade).
Group assignment	30	During the semester	Students will work in teams during the seminars and prepare for the assignment provided by the lecturer. Student will have time to prepare the slides and then will have to present their slides in front of the class. There will be time dedicated to discussion with fellow students and lecturers. All group members will be evaluated equally.
Exam	50	During the exam session	The test will consist of 6 closed-ended and 2 open-ended questions. The correct answer to a closed question – 1 point, an incorrect answer – 0 points. The correct answer to an open question – 2 points, an incorrect answer – 0 points. Partially correct answer -1 point.

Author (-s)	Publishing year	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing house or web link
Required reading				
Knowles, E. S., & Linn, J. A.	2004	Approach-avoidance model of persuasion: Alpha and omega strategies for change	In Resistance and persuasion (pp. 117-148).	Psychology Press.
Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Brewer, M. B.	1998	Experimentation in social psychology	In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), The Handbook of Social Psychology, 4th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 99-142).	Boston: McGraw Hill.
Gao, Wheeler, & Shiv	2009	The Shaken Self: Product choices as a means of restoring self-view confidence.	Journal of Consumer Research, 36, 29-38	
Rajagopal (2018).	2018	Consumer behavior theories: convergence of divergent perspectives with applications to marketing and management.	198 p. (Chapter four)	Business Expert Press.
Cialdini, R. B., Reno, R. R., & Kallgren, C. A.	1990	A focus theory of normative conduct: Recycling the concept of norms to reduce littering in public places.	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 58(6), 1015–1026.	https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.58.6.1015
Nolan, J. M., Schultz, P. W., Cialdini, R. B., Goldstein, N. J., & Griskevicius, V.	2008	Normative social influence is underdetected.	Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 34(7), 913–923.	https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208316691
White, K., Habib, R., & Hardisty, D. J.	2019	How to SHIFT consumer behaviors to be more sustainable: A literature review and guiding framework.	Journal of Marketing, 83(3), 22-49.	https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919825649
Luchs, M. G., Naylor, R. W., Irwin, J. R., & Raghunathan, R.	2010	The sustainability liability: Potential negative effects of ethicality on product preference.	Journal of Marketing, 74(5), 18-31.	https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.5.18
Recommended reading				
Griskevicius, V., & Kenrick, D. T.	2013	Fundamental motives: How evolutionary needs influence consumer behavior.	Journal of consumer psychology, 23(3), 372-386.	Griskevicius, V., & Kenrick, D. T.
Fennis, B. M., Adriaanse, M. A., Stroebe, W., & Pol, B.	(2011).	Bridging the intention–behavior gap: Inducing implementation intentions through persuasive appeal	Journal of Consumer Psychology, 21(3), 302-311.	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2010.12.003
Kardes, F. R.	1996	In defense of experimental	Journal of Consumer Psychology, 5(3), 279-296.	https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp0503_04

		consumer psychology		
Robert B. Cialdini	2007	Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion	Revised edition	Harper Collins
Ariely, D.	2010	Predictably irrational: revised and expanded edition: the hidden forces that shape our decisions	384 p	Harpercollins.
Kaminskiene, Z., Barsyte, J., Dewitte, S., & Uzdavinyte, E.	(2025)	The meaningful, the open-minded or the greedy? Diverging effects of distinct traits on sustainable and circular consumption	European Journal of Marketing, 59(13), 419–451.	https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-10-2023-0808
Gineikiene, J., Schlegelmilch, B. B., & Ruzeviciute, R.	(2016).	Our apples are healthier than your apples: Deciphering the healthiness bias for domestic and foreign products. Journal of International Marketing, 24(2), 80-99.	Journal of International Marketing, 24(2), 80-99.	https://doi.org/10.1509/jim.15.0078